



PHILIP L. BROWNING
Director

**County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

Board of Supervisors

HILDA L. SOLIS
First District

MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
Second District

SHEILA KUEHL
Third District

DON KNABE
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

September 16, 2015

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: Philip L. Browning
Director

**RESPONSE TO THE JUNE 9, 2015 BOARD MOTION (ITEM NO. 8) ON SUPPORTING
RELATIVE CAREGIVERS**

Executive Summary

This is in response to your Board's motion on March 3, 2015, instructing the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in consultation with the Interim Chief Executive Officer, the Office of Child Protection, and the Departments of Public Social Services (DPSS) and Community and Senior Services (CSS), to report back on all of the following in time for inclusion in the FY 2015-16 Supplemental Changes to the budget:

- 1) The programs and services (including DPSS and CSS programs) provided to relative caregivers, as well as an analysis of the gaps where additional support is needed from both countywide and regional perspectives.
- 2) Using the solicitation process for the Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project as a model, DCFS shall issue a Request for Information to partner with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to develop Kinship Support programs, and allocate up to \$1.25M annually from its existing budget to contract with qualified CBOs.
- 3) The volume and types of calls received by the DCFS Ombudsman in calendar year 2014.
- 4) The feasibility of establishing a 24/7 Caregiver Call Center within its existing budget to support the needs of relative and foster caregivers or birth parents.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

ITEM NUMBER 1 RESPONSE:

DCFS offers an array of services to relative caregivers that include support groups, educational advocacy, tutoring referrals and consultation with social workers, and referrals to other county or community-based agencies. DCFS also offers the Approved Relative Caregiver (ARC) Program to caregivers who are not currently eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster Care (AFDC-FC). The ARC program provides approved relative caregivers, with whom an eligible child is placed, the opportunity to receive payments equal to the basic foster care rate.

Community and Senior Services (CSS) offer services to relative caregivers in Los Angeles County through the Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP). FCSP is available to relatives aged 55 and older who are raising a child(ren) aged 18 or younger. FCSP provides assistance in accessing services; caregiver assessment, support groups and counseling; respite services; and assistive devices for caregiving, home adaptations and emergency cash/material aid. CSS can utilize a maximum of 10% or \$144,932 of FCSP to support caregivers.

The Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and DCFS provide additional support to relative caregivers through the Linkages program. Linkages is a service coordination partnership between DPSS and DCFS to address the common barriers that limit the caregiver's ability to work and keep the children safely at home. Through Linkages, caregivers are provided the following services:

- Potential eligibility to DPSS benefits and services including CalWORKS/GAIN, General Relief, Calfresh, and/or Medi-Cal benefits;
- DPSS' GAIN Services Workers (GSW), who are co-located in DCFS offices, participate in or contribute their expertise to Child and Family Team meetings. The GSWs navigate and access DPSS services for relative caregivers when children are placed in their care by DCFS;
- DPSS also provides services coordination for CalWORKS families with the DCFS Family Preservation (FP) plan by integrating DPSS expertise into DCFS' Family Preservation Multi-Disciplinary Case Planning meetings and activities;

In addition, EWs visit the two Kinship Support Centers to provide information on available programs and assist relative caregivers with resources.

DCFS has identified the following service areas where additional supports and services are needed for caregivers:

Relative Caregiver and Placed Child Services Gap

- Immediate service needs – Those services arising from the unexpected child placement. Meeting the immediate needs following the child placement is crucial to stabilizing the new relative caregiver – child relationship. Fiscal services,

medical/dental health services and basic supplies/services are top priorities that must be addressed at the time of placement.

- On-going service needs – Those services needed for the continued support of both caregiver and child. Different relative caregiver needs emerge as child placement develops and the child matures. A non-exhaustive list of service needs include, caregiver support groups, transportation, child tutoring/education-special needs advocacy, caregiver education, legal assistance/advocacy and child/respite care.

Geographic Service Gap

Many areas of Los Angeles County lack all of the services needed for the relative caregiver. Pockets of available services in South Central, the South Bay, the Westside and the Antelope Valley areas are insufficient to provide services to the 5,700 relative caregivers, as well as about 12,000 relative caregivers annually moving into and out of the relative caregiver system. The two DCFS Kinship Resource Centers cannot adequately serve all of Los Angeles County.

Under-developed Community Agency Services Networks and Services Navigation

There are agencies that may provide one or more needed services to relatives, but service networks are not mature and need to be better developed, made known and available to nearby relative caregivers. The lack of relative caregiver needs assessment and services navigation compounds their challenge in obtaining the desired services. Agencies providing useful services can be easily overwhelmed when serving a relative caregiver population that may not be its primary focus.

Governmental and Community Agency Coordination and Demographic Focus

Governmental and community agencies must better coordinate services, inform relative caregivers of services and demonstrate the leadership to promote the development of needed services that do not currently exist or are not accessible. Demographically, the relative caregiver population is older, in or approaching retirement, may significantly rely on public transportation, cannot easily travel long distances and relies more on services in their local community. Barriers confronting senior citizens are common to relative caregivers and add challenges to caring for children placed with them.

Communication, Outreach and Information Dissemination

Kinship support program communications are passive by design. After the initial assessment, orientation and home inspection process to ensure relative caregiver homes meet Title 22 regulations for approval of ongoing child placement, the DCFS ASFA staff who initially offered kinship support services do not personally contact the relative until an annual assessment 12 months later. The two Kinship Resource Centers reach out primarily through mailings and respond to relative caregivers who seek services. Many relative caregivers do not seek services and some cannot due to distance, participate in kinship social and educational events. Online based communication, outreach and training have not been fully explored. Currently, kinship training is an option and recommended by DCFS. Recent efforts to restart a Kinship Education, Preparation and Support relative caregiver training program resulted in poor attendance. When the Resource Family Approval process is eventually implemented, training will be required for relative caregivers annually.

ITEM NUMBER 2 RESPONSE:

To better provide kinship services to Relatives, Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFM) and non-DCFS case relative caregivers, DCFS proposes County contracts for a continuum of services that begins at the Caregiver's home following the placement of the child and continues throughout the placement period.

DCFS will proceed with developing a Demonstration Project entitled: Relative Home Assessment and Support Services (RHASS), consistent with the June 9, 2015 Board Motion, with the following features including but not limited to those identified below:

In-Home of Relative Caregiver Services within 5 Days of Initial Placement

- Relative home-site inspection
- Emergency needs assessment/support (such as food, transportation, emergency need vouchers)*
- Caregiver orientation/review of caregiver and minor's rights
- Procurement of supplies/services for Corrective Action Plan/Documented Alternative Plan (CAP/DAP) to comply with Title 22
- Kinship services needs assessment
- Documentation of relative home-site visits and communications with the CSW, adding to other CSW information needed to make ongoing child placement decision within 30 days of initial placement

Post-Placement Approval Relative Caregiver Kinship Services

- Respite and child care linkages*
- Systems navigation and collaboration with local Agencies (eg: Courts/schools/County Departments)*
- Visitation accommodations at agency providers*
- Support groups and training*
- Educational advocacy, guidance and referrals for tutoring*
- Legal assistance*
- ASFA home assessment support*
- Health/mental health services and other social services referrals*
- Assistance with eligibility for governmental benefits (eg: ARC, AB12, CalFresh, Section 8, etc.)*
- Family support services, activities to support economic stability/social connection w/caregivers*
- On-going periodic outreach to relative caregivers to offer kinship support services
- On-going reporting to CSW regarding relative caregiver receipt/offer of kinship services
- Permanency (Legal Guardianship, Adoption) Counseling

*Services identified in the June 9, 2015 Board Motion

ITEM NUMBER 3 RESPONSE:

Other Contract Features

- A 24/7 Call Center will be explored as a referral service for relative caregivers and foster parents.
- Contracts by SPA boundaries instead of Supervisorial boundaries may be used as the contract service areas to enhance the Counties abilities to cross-reference data based by SPAs
- Some SPAs may justify multiple contractors due to high number of relative caregivers in SPA. Contracts will be funded proportional to relative caregiver assessments and/or relative caregiver population per SPA
- Minimum contract amount of \$250K
- Services identified are not exhaustive. DCFS mailed approximately 5,700 surveys to relative caregivers to assess their needs. DCFS will report on results in mid-October
- Because the contract period is expected to overlap the Statewide Counties implementation of the Resource Family Approval (RFA), contractors will have an opportunity to participate in the transition process

CLIENTS

Relative Caregivers
Non-Related Extended Family Members
Non-DCFS Relative Caregivers

SERVICE PROVIDERS

The County will seek Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) that demonstrate experience in prevention, aftercare and visitation services to provide Relative Home Assessment Services (RHASS). RHASS contractors are not expected to directly provide all kinship support services, nor would this be desirable. Contractors will be expected to develop and coordinate a network of kinship services with other CBOs for their contracted areas. RHASS contractors will be required to integrate current/former relative caregiver input, including but not limited to, advisory roles or hired positions.

COLLABORATION

Throughout this Demonstration Project, DCFS will consult and utilize input from other County Departments including the Interim Chief Executive Officer, Office of Child Protection, DPSS, and CSS, as well as others who may offer resources and supports. Stakeholder meetings will play a large role in determining what services may be immediately provided and what services need more CBO development. Also, DCFS will work with the Union to transition to contractors' duties previously performed by County staff to strengthen the service continuum for relative caregivers.

PROJECTED TIMELINE

CDSS approval pending for Procurement by Negotiation (PBN) contracting process	August/September 2015
Stakeholder meetings	October/November 2015
Release of Request for Statement of Interest/Information (RFSI)	December 2015
Receive and Review RFSI	February 2016
Negotiate with qualified prospective service providers	March 2016
Agendize Board Letter to approve Contracts, train/prepare Contractors	April-May 2016
RHASS Contracts start	June 1, 2016

For calendar year 2014, there were 28 inquiries received from the State Ombudsman's office with 39% consisting of relative caregivers and Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFM). The breakdown is as follows:

- 11 Relative Caregivers/NREFM
 - Four were related to placement issues
 - Two were related to services (visits/daycare)
 - Five were related to payment issues
- Two Adoptive parents
- Two Legal guardians
- Seven biological parents
- Three youth

The DCFS Ombudsman also receives calls from relative caregivers (informal and formal) and NREFMs on the same issues via the following manner: direct calls to the Helpline, through the Public Inquiry lines or email address, as transferred calls from the Director's Office, and walk in appointments. There is no breakdown data for the public inquiry calls due to the large volume of calls received on a monthly basis. The inquiries, calls, and requests are handled by providing referrals or linkages to current resources such, as the Revenue Enhancement Foster Care Hotline, Kinship Support Services Division, and Regional Office Management. Going forward, the Kinship Services Section will establish a tracking system to identify the callers and the types of reasons for their calls.

ITEM NUMBER 4 RESPONSE:

The Kinship Support Division recognizes that there are instances in which relative caregivers need to reach the Kinship staff after regular business hours and is working in collaboration with current departmental resources to combine existing 800 numbers to develop a 24/7 Warm Line for the entire department.

Each Supervisor
September 16, 2015
Page 7

If you have any questions or need additional information, please call me or your staff may contact Aldo Marin, Board Liaison, at (213) 351-5530.

PLB: RRS:BD
WC:lj

c: Interim Chief Executive Officer
Interim County Counsel
Acting Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Department of Public Social Services
Community and Senior Services